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The Honorable John Hickenlooper
Mayor
City of Denver
City and County Building
1437 Bannock Street, Suite 350
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Mayor Hickenlooper,

I was disturbed by recent news reports indicating that Bill Ritter, who served as District attorney from 1993 until 2005, routinely went out of his way to cut “designer plea bargains” with legal and illegal aliens. According to recent news reports, Ritter carefully tailored these plea agreements to ensure that these criminal aliens – charged with a variety of offenses ranging from serious drug offenses to violent crimes like assault – could avoid deportation and remain inside the country.

As you know, *The Denver Post* recently reported that from 1998 to 2004 alone, more than 150 alien defendants pleaded guilty to the contrived charge of “agricultural trespass” so that they could remain in the country. A review of just fifteen of these cases uncovered alien defendants charged with possession of 2,000 grams of methamphetamine, reckless endangerment, assault, auto theft, cocaine possession, and the possession and sale of heroin. The bulk of these defendants received probation after Ritter offered them the farm trespassing charge as part of what appears to be a “plead and release” policy, allowing criminal aliens to remain in the country.

As a result of this “plead and release” policy, some criminal aliens who were released went on to commit future crimes. One defendant, a 24-year old man from Mexico who was allowed to plead to the agricultural charge was later arrested on attempted murder charges for involvement in a gang-related drive-by shooting.

As Mayor of Denver, I would imagine that you are as disturbed as I am about these reports. As disturbing as they are, however, the *Post* story looked only at plea bargains after 1998— five years *after* Ritter’s DA tenure began. Given that Ritter’s served as DA from 1993 to 2005, however, there could potentially be hundreds of criminal aliens walking Colorado’s streets that took advantage of Ritter’s policy between 1993 and 1998.

We also know from the Department of Justice data from the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) that more than 3,000 criminal aliens were released from Denver jail over this 12-year period and not deported after serving their sentences. If Denver had taken advantage of the federal program that trains and deputizes jail officials to identify illegal aliens and place “hold for immigration” notices on them, they could have been removed by ICE and deported. Bill Ritter never asked the Police Department to look into this program.

As you may know, Houston Mayor Bill White (D) announced last week the implementation of expanded new procedures to crack down on suspected illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants detained on minor violations in Houston will reportedly now be fingerprinted. The same rule would apply to anyone with an ID police believe is questionable and all information will be sent to federal authorities. Unfortunately, these policy changes came one week after a Houston policeman was killed by an illegal alien. Given how many criminal aliens Ritter’s “plead and release” policy have put back on Colorado streets over the last yew years, I hope you will consider giving Denver police expanded enforcement tools as well sooner rather than later.

I hope that since Ritter’s departure, the policy of tailoring plea agreements to thwart the intent of federal immigration law has ended. In addition, I hope that you will consider implementing additional policies and procedures to provide Denver police officers with the same kind of enhanced tools their counterparts in Houston now have and to demonstrate to all Colorado citizens that Denver no longer welcomes illegal aliens, especially those who commit crimes against the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Tancredo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping "T" and a long, trailing "o" at the end.

Tom Tancredo
Member of Congress